5:Hammond M-5 (1948-1950)1956
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494 interior of the vehicle, there were others who had with less formality installed themselves amidst the multitudinous array of baggage, live-stock and firearms which renders every Greek bus incapable of passing beneath what used, in England at least, to be described as 'a low
491 bridge'. To the north of Drama the road crosses a dusty plain for
[669] several kilometres and then turns sharply to the right between two high peaks and winds laboriously up a rocky defile. Every few hundred yards there was a bridge: either guarded by a block-house, manned by men of the mobile section of the home-guard, or else lying in ruins and necessitating a perilous descent into a dried-up water course. These occasional outposts apart, we saw no human habitation for the best part of another twenty kilometres, when we reached the head of the pass. Here we halted for a few minutes and refreshed ourselves with cold mountain water from a stream by the roadside. Shortly after three
[726] o'clock we began the descent into the well-watered plateau, within sight of the Bulgarian frontier, on the northern fringe of which lies the village of Kato Nevrokopi, and which had been the scene of bitter fighting when the Germans poured into Greece in April, 1941. A few
346 minutes later we were among the houses of Nevrokopi and my fellow-
727 passengers pointed out to me the cottage, in no way distinguishable
793 from its neighbours save by the board bearing the Byzantine eagles and the inscription *ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΥΡΟΚΟΠΙΟΥ* beside the door, which, *faute de mieux*, has served as the bishop's headquarters since 1945: the old metropolis having been destroyed during the Bulgarian occupation of eastern Macedonia.

574 Half-past three on a warm August afternoon not being a discreet
[521] hour at which to call on a Greek bishop, I retired to the green shade of a vine beside the *plateia* to sip coffee and discuss such varied topics as the Bishop of Birmingham, Schiller and the Scottish liturgy (and, inevitably, the incredible folly of the British electorate in banishing Mr. Churchill to the opposition benches), with the commanding officer of the gendarmerie and other local celebrities. Meanwhile, a troop of small boys was despatched at regular intervals to reconnoitre in the vicinity of the
[513] metropolis. At half-past four it was reported that the windows were open (all true Greeks sleep with windows and shutters firmly closed), and I was thereupon escorted to the metropolis where I was warmly welcomed by the Bishop. We talked until a little after six o'clock,
796 when the *ephemerios*, or curate, of the parish arrived to lead the way to
788 church for evensong.

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
EH1 Greece EH1

[Village Life]

When the Second World War came, followed by Italian and German occupation and drastic derangement of the national economy, the situation of the hill villages became truly desperate. Starvation visited many of them.

Famine in time of war was age-old; and the response of the hillsmen of Greece also had very ancient precedent behind it, for they took gun in hand, and attempted to seize forcibly what they could no longer gain peaceably from the plains. They formed the backbone of the wartime ~~resistance forces~~, and justified their violence by patriotism, quite in the spirit their forefathers had shown in attacking the Turks. Yet the resistance movement was not merely a reassertion of old patterns. Its leadership was mainly provided by Communists, who in earlier years had been a small and not very significant group, largely confined to the towns. [1]

In the wartime resistance movement the inhabitants of the hill villages found a sort of economic relief, inasmuch as the guerrilla bands lived by raiding the plains, taking by force a part of the agricultural surplus of those regions in order to feed themselves. A young man, without any real occupation in his native village, and without any hope of a career at home which could satisfy even the traditionally low level of expectation among the hillsmen, could, by joining a guerrilla band, hope to feed himself and relieve his family of the burden of his presence. In addition, he could become a hero, fighting for freedom and liberty, social justice and a better life for all.

For most peasant boys, the ulterior aims of their Communist leaders meant little or nothing. Indeed, the Communists were at very considerable pains to play down any plans they had for social revolution, and welcomed persons of widely differing social views into the ranks of the resistance. This was, of course,

1. There were a number of non-Communist resistance bands also, but most of them did not last long, and the successful ones were confined to Epirus, in the northwest.

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
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[Public Life in 1947]

considerable proportion of the population, especially among 665
the workmen of the towns and the peasants of the hill villages. 727
No one can say how large this group was, but to estimate it at about 20 per cent of the nation's total population is a reasonable guess.

Another important asset of the Communists was their war- [726] •
time record as leaders of resistance against the Germans and Italians. They could plausibly paint themselves as true champions of Greek national freedom and of democracy, while accusing their opponents of betraying the interests of the nation first to the Axis and then to the British. To be both a patriot and a Communist sympathizer did not therefore seem incompatible.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, the Communists did have a more or less definite program of action and knew what they wanted. They were able to explain the continued distress of the country as a natural result of the creeping crisis of capitalism. They had a ready cure at hand in the abolition of private ownership of the means of production, as a preliminary to planned industrial expansion, on the Russian model. To many Communist followers, no doubt, the program meant little more than an angry intention to take from the rich and give to the poor, i.e., to themselves, all the good things which had selfishly and unjustly been withheld from them. Others, more sophisticated, realized that there would inevitably be a long period of time when suffering and poverty still would prevail, but believed that in the long run the dream of abundance for all could be realized, if the government planned economic activity and compelled sufficient investment. And no matter what the degree of economic understanding among their followers, the Communists had the advantage of offering the distressed and confused a cause to which to dedicate themselves, an enemy against

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
EH1 Greece EH1
Cherasia

[Hill Villages]

terracing, attempted no planting of fruit trees or of vines, and in general refused to borrow any of the traditional and very effective methods of Greek Mediterranean agriculture, even though there are villages on the other side of Mount Pelion, within less than two hours' walking distance, where these methods have been in use for centuries on land intrinsically no better than that of the Cherasia hillsides. (There is one important difference, however: because Cherasia's land faces north, toward the open Thessalian plain, cold winter winds blow across it and make olive cultivation impossible. But olive cultivation is and has always been the backbone of Mediterranean hillside agriculture. This undoubtedly is the reason why settlers from over the mountain never tried to exploit Cherasia's hillsides, leaving them to shepherds for winter pasture.)

The upshot of the history and traditions of Cherasia was that even before World War II, a thoroughly revolutionary mood prevailed in the village. The poor – which is to say nearly everybody in the village except the three families – felt the need to find a scapegoat for what was happening to them. They despised but also envied the three "rich" families, and felt that it would no more than serve them right to be plundered of all they had gained. The villagers also held the government and all other persons in authority vaguely responsible for the straits in which they found themselves. They could not help casting greedy eyes upon rich villages like Lofiscos, which lies within sight of Cherasia, a scant twenty miles across the flat Thessalian plain. But unlike most Greek villagers, they did not really want agricultural land; plunder was more in line with the tradition of the community.

The Communist-led guerrilla movement of World War II therefore found unusually ready and unanimous support in Cherasia. No one was willing to tell me how many men from

6: McNeill H-5 (1947, 1956) 1957
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Cherasia

[Hill Villages]

the village joined the resistance during the occupation period; 726 ●
but my guess is that practically every able-bodied man took 669
part at some time or other in guerrilla actions, even though
some of the villagers remained ostensibly civilian. A conse- [727]
quence was that in 1943 a German expedition burnt all the
houses of the upper village and made it uninhabitable. The peo-
ple of Cherasia, fortunately, saw them coming and had time to
escape over the mountain.

The "liberation" of Greece in 1944 brought no liberation to 669
Cherasia. Quite the contrary, it interfered with the process by [579]
which armed men from the village had been able during the
occupation to get grain and other goods from the plains. Con-
sequently, when three men appeared on Mount Pelion in 1946
and summoned the young men of the village to take arms again,
the response was immediate. When I visited the village in 1947,
a guerrilla band, some thirty strong, was encamped in the ruins
of the upper village. A detachment descended each evening to
gather supplies from the inhabitants of the lower village and
from other villages out in the plain. Most of the members of the
band were sons of families living in lower Cherasia, although
the leaders of the band came from elsewhere.

During the day, the Greek army, from a strong point in a
neighboring plains village, took possession of Cherasia. Each
morning a patrol of soldiers came to the village and demanded
to know who had been collaborating with the guerrillas; each
evening the guerrillas came down from the mountain and de-
manded to know who had been helping the soldiers. Under the
circumstances, life was difficult, to say the least. The army
sometimes beat those suspected of sympathizing with the guer-
rillas. In addition, irregular rightist bands visited the commu- [727]
nity several times and indulged in greater violence, killing sev-
eral people and burning down seven houses. The guerrillas,